



11th Assembly District

e- Newsletter July 2005

2005-2006 Budget Passed

In a bipartisan compromise, the California State Legislature recently approved the 2005-06 state budget averting a prolonged budget impasse. The \$117.5 billion package increases funding for schools, but unfortunately not as much as needed under Proposition 98, repays local governments for funds borrowed by the state in the past and provides new funds for road and highway projects. The budget reduces our deficit, includes no new borrowing or taxes and makes no deep cuts in social or health care services. Like any compromise it does not satisfy all, but it was the best that could be done this year.

The budget agreement includes:

Education – The budget provides \$3 billion more for schools to help pay for enrollment growth and inflation. Higher education will receive a 10 percent increase in state funding to help accommodate enrollment growth. And for the first time in many years, community colleges fees will not increase.

Local Government – Local governments will receive an early repayment of \$1.2 billion, borrowed to make up for the loss of vehicle license fee revenue when the car tax was reduced in 2003. By using one-time revenues to pay that debt ahead of time, the state not only helps local government but also erases some red ink from the next round of budgeting and avoids committing an undependable revenue source to ongoing obligations.

Transportation – This budget for the first time keeps the commitment to transportation that voters made when they passed Proposition 42 in 2002, which shifted the state sales tax on gasoline from the general fund to roads and transit. These Prop 42 funds provide a \$1.3 billion boost to local and state transportation projects. Contra Costa County and the cities in the 11th Assembly district will receive \$3.6 million for their uses.

State projects in our area eligible for Prop. 42 funding include:

- Widening of Highway 4 from Loveridge to Sommersville Road
- Additional improvements to Highway 4
- Improvements to the Hercules Rail Station
- Vasco Road Safety & Enhancement Project
- Improvements to Highway 680
- Add 4th bore tunnel at the Caldecott Tunnel with additional lanes

While the compromise budget balances on paper, it does so due to a surge in tax revenues this spring that budget experts say will not be repeated. That, plus the reemergence next year of obligations the state postponed in the past, means California will be looking at a new projected deficit of \$5 - 7 billion then. Even though the budget deficit has been reduced by approximately \$10 billion, economists and fiscal analysts warn that future shortfalls will likely continue until a long-term fix that better balances spending with revenues is approved.

As your representative, I will continue to use my time in the legislature to support fiscal accountability and to advocate for reforms to remedy the dysfunction in our state political system. These actions are critical if California is to remain a vibrant and desirable place to live and work. I look forward to hearing from you on this year's state budget. Please contact my office with your questions and comments.

2005 Legislative Update

AJR 8 (Marine Pollution) urges Congress to ratify an existing international treaty to reduce air pollution from ocean-going vessels. The treaty establishes new emissions standards and would require large ships calling on California and other North American ports to burn cleaner, low-sulfur fuel. The resolution is supported by the US shipping industry, local ports, and environmental groups.

AB 388 (Textbook Cost Reduction) will help reduce the soaring costs of instructional materials while still maintaining the overall quality of textbooks. AB 388: 1) requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to submit a report recommending strategies to reduce the cost of K-12 instructional materials; 2) requires the State Board of Education to consider price as one factor in adopting instructional materials; and 3) requires that price increases submitted by publishers during the life of the adoption be tied to the national Consumer Price Index. The bill is supported by school administrators, school districts, and teachers.

AB 916 (Elder Abuse Penalties) imposes longer prison terms on any person who commits theft, embezzlement, forgery, fraud, or identity theft with respect to the property or personal identifying information of an elderly person. Crimes committed against elders and dependent adults are on the rise throughout the country. Many of these victims are unable to protect themselves because they are confused, are on medications or are mentally or physically impaired. Tougher penalties would serve as a warning and a deterrent to criminals who consider targeting this vulnerable population. The bill is supported by law enforcement, financial institutions and senior organizations.

AB 967 (Concurrent Enrollment) allows greater flexibility for high school students to enroll in advanced scholastic or vocational courses during summer months at community colleges. By allowing community colleges to work more cooperatively with high schools, students will become more familiar with college opportunities and be encouraged to pursue higher education after graduating from high school. The bill is supported by the California PTA and statewide community colleges.

AB 1459 (Small Claims Increase) provides consumers with greater options when filing a small claim in court. This bill increases the jurisdictional limit for small claims court from \$5,000 to \$7,500 for individuals only and seeks to improve the justice system in the court. This increase makes the small claims court a more viable option for individuals who might otherwise not pursue because the costs associated with traditional litigation often exceeds the amount due. The bill is supported by Consumers Union, the California Judges Association and the California Realtors Association.

AB 1495 (Homeland Security) encourages better cooperation between major industries and the State Office on Homeland (OHS) on anti-terrorism coordination by exempting from public disclosure security related information provided to OHS by industry. Assemblymember Canciamilla introduced this measure after he learned that a number of major employers in his district and surrounding areas, including oil refineries, chemical manufacturing, and electrical power plants, were reluctant to share sensitive security information with OHS since it could become public information and be accessed by terrorists. The bill is supported by OHS and major California industries.

Homeowners and Renters Assistance Program

Assemblymember Joe Canciamilla (D-Pittsburg) is encouraging qualified residents in the 11th Assembly District to submit a claim for homeowners or renters assistance to the State Franchise Tax Board. Under this program, eligible renters can receive a refund anywhere from \$15.00 to \$347.00 based on their income and eligible homeowners can receive comparable funds based upon their property value and total household income.

Canciamilla noted that due to state budget constraints, Franchise Tax Board staff will not be able to provide assistance to residents in filling out their claim forms. "I am happy to say, however, that my district office staff has considerable experience with this program and would be happy to provide assistance to anyone wishing help in submitting their claim."

Claims must be submitted between July 1, 2005 and October 15, 2005. To file a claim you must have been one of the following on December 31, 2003: 62 years of age or older, blind, or disabled. In addition you must meet all of the following requirements: you paid more than \$50 or more rent per month in 2003, or you owned and lived in your own home on December 31, 2003; your total household income for 2003 was \$38,505 or less, and you are a United States citizen, a designated alien, or a qualified alien when you file your claim.

Claim forms and direction booklets are currently available at Assemblyman Canciamilla's district office located at 815 Estudillo Street in Martinez.

Pre-recorded information on the Homeowner and Renter Assistance Program is available by calling 1-800-868-4171. You can also get assistance by going to the Franchise Tax Board website at www.ftb.ca.gov, or by contacting Assemblymember Canciamilla's office at (925) 372-7990.

"I would really like to encourage qualified residents, particularly our senior citizens, to take advantage of this program," Canciamilla concluded.

Community Corner

Congratulations are in order for Pittsburg residents **Edward and Susana Abinsay** who celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on July 9, 2005. On behalf of the California State Assembly, Mr. and Mrs. Abinsay were recently presented with a certificate from Assemblyman Joseph Canciamilla commemorating the occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Abinsay are currently enjoying a well-deserved vacation in their native Phillipines.

Bay Point resident **Kareem Wall**, a sixth-grader at King's Valley Christian School in Concord, was recently selected by the United States Achievement Academy to receive two national awards. Kareem, the son of David and Patricia Wall, was named the recipient of the Minority Leadership and Scholarship National Award. In recognition of his consistent ability to maintain a 4.0 grade point average while participating in extra-curricular activities, Kareem also received the All-American Scholar At-Large Award.

Antioch residents **Norma and Peter Giannotti** will be celebrating their 70th Wedding Anniversary on July 28, 2005. First generation Italian Americans who have lived their entire life in the Delta region, the couple first met when Peter's parents worked on the Sherman Island farm of Norma's parents. They bought a home on West 7th Street in Antioch in 1941, where they raised their family and continue to live an independent life to this day. Assemblymember Canciamilla personally presented the Giannotti's with a Proclamation on behalf of the California State Assembly at a celebration held by their children at the Riverview Lodge in Antioch on Saturday, July 23rd.

If you know of anyone in the 11th Assembly District deserving of special recognition please let us know by calling or e-mailing us at our District Office in Martinez.



A warm welcome was given to Antioch resident **Philip Arndt** (pictured above with Concord Mayor Laura Hoffmeister), who was recently installed as the incoming Chairman of the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce at their annual installation dinner. Also honored that evening were outgoing Chairman Larry Sauers, Ellen Williams of Niche Ventures (recognized as Volunteer of the Year), and Carolyn Anderson of Lehmer-GMC-Pontiac-Oldsmobile-Jeep (recognized as Business Person of the Year).



Assemblyman Canciamilla (left) and Remy Goldsmith of Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher's office with outgoing Concord Chamber Chairman Larry Sauers.

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